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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [PREL](#) [YI](#) [SR](#)
SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO STATE 80071: KOSOVO FINAL STATUS
DECISION (C-RE6-00623)

REF: A. (1) BELGRADE 856

[1](#)B. (2) BELGRADE 786

Classified By: Ambassador Michael C. Polt for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)A. (U) POLITICAL/LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

1) (S) DO KOSTUNICA AND/OR TADIC THINK KOSOVO'S
INDEPENDENCE CAN BE PREVENTED?

(S) No. Kostunica thinks he can postpone the decision and in the meantime lead the final result away from independence. He continues to tell us emphatically that he will never accept an independent Kosovo. Tadic thinks he can wait out the result and survive politically, especially if the democratic forces close ranks before a settlement. Both men have certainly heard loud and clear the private messages from USG and other members of the CG with regards to our belief that independence will be the outcome. Both men will attempt to either protect themselves from the expected backlash from the Serbian electorate (or in the case of Kostunica, draw on international law and regional neighbors to either forestall independence or complicate its imposition). We also note recent polls suggesting a backlash will not be so intense. Kostunica continues to tell us about his private conversations with leaders (Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, perhaps Macedonia) and cites some western European leaders as offering concern that the process is rushing too fast towards independence. Kostunica might use this perceived discord among the international community in the hope of delaying or derailing the independence process. Tadic is not so creative. We do not rule out Kostunica resigning, or calling for a referendum, in the event of Kosovo independence.

(S) DO THEY BELIEVE THAT THE RUSSIANS AND CHINESE WILL BACK SERBIA'S POSITION ON KOSOVO IF BELGRADE PUTS FORTH A GOOD FAITH EFFORT DURING THE FINAL STATUS TALKS?

(S) This is a tactical decision not yet resolved. Kostunica frequently refers to, and tries to exploit, perceived divisions within the Contact Group. The GOS would bank on getting Russia (and China) to back a compromise solution if they manage to deadlock the proceedings (e.g. delayed UN seat, no Kosovo army, possibly even partition).

(S) WOULD THEY BE PREPARED TO BUY OFF RUSSIAN AND CHINESE SUPPORT, AND IF SO, WHAT PRICE ARE THEY WILLING TO PAY?

(S) The GOS would be prepared to offer solidarity with Russian and Chinese positions on minorities (Georgia, Moldova, Abkhazia, Tibet, Taiwan, etc.) But, in fact, Serbia does not have the means to buy, such Russian or Chinese support.

2) (S) WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE KOSOVO ISSUE COULD FORGE BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN TADIC AND KOSTUNICA AS THEY

UNITE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO PREVENT KOSOVO'S INDEPENDENCE?

(S) Slim to none. They are wary of each other personally while understanding that they benefit politically from being close politically for now. Tadic is convinced that the next government will be a DS-led DS/DSS coalition and he has said that Kostunica can be won over by a promise to retain his premiership, even if the DSS is the minority partner. Kostunica is likely much more Machiavellian and more likely to succeed in exploiting the DS for his own purposes. Kostunica is most likely also hoping to build a national bloc of like-minded parties that would rival the DS.

(S) ARE THEY LINKED AT THE HIP ON KOSOVO?

(S) There are not significant differences on policy between the two on Kosovo. However, Tadic will be more inclined to be constructive after a settlement if the democratic forces have succeeded in forging a strong coalition.

(S) WILL THEY BOTH SUFFER POLITICALLY IF KOSOVO IS GRANTED INDEPENDENCE?

(S) They would both disassociate themselves from the result, and go back to the electorate with the victimization rhetoric that has been employed in the past. Tadic will focus on the need for the GOS to be committed to its European future. Kostunica is more likely to stress nationalist themes. Polls do not necessarily indicate a major change in voting preferences, but a sharp rise in democratic voter apathy would benefit the SRS.

3) (S) WOULD KOSTUNICA AND/OR TADIC WITHDRAW FROM FINAL STATUS DELIBERATIONS BEFORE THE TALKS ARE FULLY COMPLETED?

(S) The current inclination for both men is to hope against hope and try as much as possible to stay in the game to achieve their objective of avoiding blame for losing Kosovo. Advisors on both sides have been crystal clear that notwithstanding reservations about negotiations they have no interest or intention to walk away from the table. That said, when presented with Kosovo independence, they are likely to walk away.

4) (S) IF THEY DID WITHDRAW EARLY WHAT MIGHT THE IMPETUS FOR SUCH A STRATEGY BE?

(S) The public announcement of the impending independence decision. If elections are called early, they would definitely stall the GOS, participation. They could withdraw as the endgame approaches because of their desire to preserve political capital with the electorate during elections.

(S) WOULD BOTH BE WILLING TO RESIGN FROM THEIR CURRENT POSITIONS? WOULD BOTH FAVOR EARLY ELECTIONS?

(S) While we do not rule it out, neither the PM or President is likely to resign as they would use their positions to go back to the voters (via elections or a referendum) and try to get a clearer mandate for their plan to proceed. Tadic and the DS want early elections more than Kostunica and the DSS. Tadic, with a five year term lasting to 2009, is least likely to resign.

(S) WOULD EITHER OF THEM BE INCLINED TO WITHDRAW FROM POLITICAL LIFE ALTOGETHER?

(S) Not likely. There was some speculation that Kostunica would retire and return to the University, but our contacts for the most part dismiss these rumors. They say Kostunica is far more enamored of the power of the office and he will try to retain the position at all costs. Tadic has told us that he might lie low and wait out a Radical government, but clearly he sees his future in politics.

(S) WOULD EITHER BE PREPARED TO JOIN A COALITION WITH THE

SOCIALISTS OR THE RADICALS TO REMAIN IN POWER IF EARLY ELECTIONS WERE HELD?

(S) Normally, neither would ever join in government with extreme nationalists. However, if Kostunica were left with no other options we could envision him constructing a coalition with (reform elements of) the Radicals and Socialists (as he has done since 2004). Kostunica has always suggested his preference for a National Unity government as the most appropriate vehicle for resolving supranational questions like Kosovo. Tadic has always maintained that he would never join with either Socialists or Radicals in government.

5) (S) WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS THAT BELGRADE COULD SEEK TO LOBBY OTHER GOVERNMENTS INVOLVED IN "FROZEN CONFLICT" AREAS SUCH AS GEORGIA AND MOLDOVA TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST INDEPENDENCE FOR KOSOVO?

(S) This is very likely to happen in the UN.

(S) HOW DOES BELGRADE PLAN TO USE OTHER KEY UN MEMBER STATES AND ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, TO BLOCK KOSOVO'S INDEPENDENCE?

(S) This is not likely to be used as a tool to block independence, rather to block UN membership. They understand that once key states recognize Kosovo, their most productive course of action is blocking or at least delaying UN membership.

6) (S) UNDER WHAT SCENARIOS/CONDITIONS COULD BELGRADE AGREE TO KOSOVAR INDEPENDENCE? WHAT SPECIFIC CONDITIONS, GUARANTEES FOR KOSOVO SERBS, MUST BE PROVIDED TO WIN BELGRADE'S BACKING?

(S) They won't agree in the foreseeable future, but there are conditions under which Belgrade might tolerate it (e.g. not employ a policy of actively undermining an independent Kosovo.) The minimum requirement would be guarantees for local control for Serb communities in the areas that are defined under the enhanced competencies proposal and unhindered vertical links to Belgrade for Serbian communities in Kosovo. Protection of Serbian Orthodox Church property and security for Kosovo Serbs are also sine qua nons. Leon Kojen (senior negotiator and advisor to Tadic) has made the distinction between constitutional/legal guarantees and administrative/political control. For Belgrade, both are absolute requirements.

(S) WHAT WOULD BE AN ACCEPTABLE TIMEFRAME FOR KOSOVO'S EVENTUAL INDEPENDENCE FROM BELGRADE'S PERSPECTIVE?

(S) There is no acceptable timeframe for Kosovo's eventual independence. Belgrade would prefer the question of Kosovo's independence to be subsumed under the EU integration process that would allow them the freedom to ignore the question, at least for many more years.

1B. (U) STABILITY AND SECURITY ISSUES

(S) (Note: Our assessments of stability issues in particular assume a continued moderate, democratic government. A SRS government would force a significant recalibration of our views. End note.)

1) (S) WOULD KOSTUNICA/TADIC SUPPORT EFFORTS TO DESTABILIZE OR OTHERWISE DEFEND SERB INTERESTS IN OTHER AREAS, MOST NOTABLY MONTENEGRO, BOSNIA (REPUBLIKA SRSPKA), CROATIA, AND SOUTHERN SERBIA, AS RETALIATION FOR GRANTING KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE?

(S) Nothing here suggests that the GOS has any kind of plan or intention to use minority issues in neighboring states as a way of promoting their position on Kosovo. More likely the difficulty will be north of the Ibar River where Belgrade is likely to do very little to keep nationalist elements there

in check. The Radicals would be far more irredentist in power.

2) (S) DOES BELGRADE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO DESTABILIZE THESE AND OTHER REGIONS? IF SO, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE TACTICS AND WHO ARE SOME OF THE PLAYERS THEY WILL SEEK TO USE TO IMPLEMENT THEIR AGENDA?

(S) Belgrade will preserve the relatively good relations it has with states in the region. Again, it is not likely they would deploy any kind of grand destabilization plan. The leadership in north Mitrovica and among the Serb communities in the area north of the Ibar is already quite radical and has the capacity to create a lot of practical problems for an independent Kosovo. Belgrade will be careful not to do anything overtly in this effort but could plausibly deny having enough influence to keep things in order.

3) (S) HOW DETERMINED WOULD BELGRADE BE TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF NORTHERN KOSOVO IF KOSOVO WERE GRANTED INDEPENDENCE? WOULD BELGRADE ALLOW NORTHERN KOSOVO SERBS TO PURSUE THEIR OWN AGENDA? WOULD BELGRADE BACK CALLS FOR SECESSION?

(S) Much would depend on the nature of the settlement and arrangements for northern Kosovo. A special regime (e.g. like UNTAES or Brcko) firmly backed by the international community would make it difficult for Serbia to actively cause problems. There is sufficient local leadership in northern Kosovo for Belgrade to remain informed without controlling the situation on the ground. Belgrade would probably not go so far as to incorporate northern Kosovo into Serbia but they might make special consultative arrangements given the historically close ties. An attempt by the Kosovar army to impose rule north of the Ibar presents a potential flashpoint for violence.

(S) WOULD BELGRADE BE WILLING TO OFFER FINANCIAL, LOGISTICAL, AND/OR RESOURCE SUPPORT TO SUSTAIN AN INDEPENDENT NORTHERN KOSOVO?

(S) Belgrade would likely maintain its current support for Serbian communities in northern Kosovo, as well as to other Serb majority municipalities.

(S) IS THERE A SCENARIO UNDER WHICH BELGRADE WOULD SIMPLY RETREAT FROM NORTHERN KOSOVO, THUS WITHDRAWING ITS SIGNIFICANT POLICE, INTELLIGENCE, AND SECURITY APPARATUS?

(S) We do not see this as a likely scenario. Again, an interim regime under international community supervision for northern Kosovo could make it more difficult for Serbia to retain this apparatus.

1C. (U) BELGRADE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

1) (S) WHAT WOULD BELGRADE'S REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK BE SHOULD KOSOVO GAIN INDEPENDENCE UNDER A GOVERNMENT HEADED BY DSS? RADICALS? SOCIALISTS? DS? HOW WOULD ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES BE IMPACTED? WOULD BELGRADE BE LESS INCLINED TO PURSUE EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION, NAMELY EU AND NATO MEMBERSHIP?

(S) Our feeling is that no government in Serbia (SRS or otherwise) would be foolish enough to engage in overt military or paramilitary action with regards to Kosovo. More

likely, we envision a range of positions from benign tolerance for an independent Kosovo to outright rejection a la China-Taiwan. The SRS has already indicated it would declare Kosovo occupied territory⁸ and it would not recognize an independent Kosovo. What would be different would be the position of Belgrade with regards to EU integration and ultimate membership in EU and NATO. More enlightened minds in the DS and DSS could imagine a Serbia that does not accept an independent Kosovo but could still be a part of Euro-Atlantic institutions in the same way Cyprus has done without resolving the situation in the north. On

the democratic side of the house (DS or DSS) Belgrade will seek to maintain the strongest possible ties with its neighbors and try and balance its unhappiness with an independent Kosovo with its greater state interests. The Radicals or Socialists will not be as balanced.

(S) WOULD SERBIA LIKELY BECOME MORE ISOLATIONIST IN ITS THINKING? WOULD BELGRADE HAVE A STRONG BACKLASH AGAINST THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AS WAS THE CASE DURING THE NATO BOMBINGS IN 1999?

(S) There will not be a strong backlash a la 1999. Although many in the pro-Western bloc are already (privately) resigned to an independent Kosovo, it will still stall Euro-Atlantic integration and deepen frustration levels in the general public. The radicals will pounce to exploit the issue and could succeed for time to enhance xenophobia, isolationism, apathy or all of those as a result of many Serbs continuing to lose confidence that democracy and integration with Europe can deliver a better life for them. To date, the DS or DSS have shown themselves incapable of mounting an effective counter-offensive to solidify public opinion on a pro-integration stance.

2) (S) WHAT WOULD BELGRADE'S STRATEGY BE TOWARDS KOSOVO IF KOSOVO WAS NOT AWARDED INDEPENDENCE BECAUSE OF A RUSSIAN OR CHINESE VETO?

(S) The thinking here is that independence will only be avoided if Belgrade can &convince8 the Contact Group. Belgrade may believe that China or Russia can block UN membership but they are not counting on those states to block independence. However, if this does come to pass we assume Belgrade would assure the international community of its intent to adhere to its commitments of autonomy and protection of minority rights.

(S) HOW WOULD IT SEEK TO MANAGE KOSOVO UNDER A SYSTEM WHEREBY KOSOVO HAS ALMOST UNLIMITED AUTONOMY? WHAT WOULD BE AN ACCEPTABLE ARRANGEMENT FOR BELGRADE?

(S) Belgrade presented their official platform on May 30, which was as predictable as it was unrealistic (reftel 1). Any success in getting to their enlarged autonomy outcome would probably be implemented in a rather pro forma way. That said, Belgrade could be expected to deepen its support for Serbian minority communities in Kosovo. It would be acceptable to Belgrade if Kosovo had an international identity without national sovereignty (e.g. representation in IFIs and other technical multilateral international organizations). As they have said, Kosovo would have complete internal independence but would be tied however loosely to Serbia. The Serbs are assuming a need for continued IC presence but they envision a post-UNMIK international presence along the lines of a Bosnian HighRep heading an EU mission.

1D. (U) REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

1) (S) IS BELGRADE PREPARING FOR A POSSIBLE INFLUX OF KOSOVO SERBS SHOULD KOSOVO BE GRANTED INDEPENDENCE?

(S) No. They are not preparing but we believe they are expecting it. USAID is initiating a new program that will include such preparations as one component of a broader project.

(S) HOW DOES BELGRADE PLAN TO STEM THE TIDE OF POSSIBLE LARGE REFUGEE FLOWS INTO SERBIA?

(S) If Kosovo is independent, there is strong evidence that Belgrade will not seek to stem the tide of refugee flows. Likely they believe Serbs north of the Ibar will stay put and seek partition while Serbs south of the Ibar will move into Serbia proper. If history serves, the GOS may declare &defeat8 and call Serbs in Kosovo to come home.

(S) IS THERE A PLAN TO PROVIDE IMMEDIATE ACCOMMODATIONS OR

WOULD BELGRADE ALLOW THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REFUGEE CAMPS ON ITS TERRITORY?

(S) The GOS has thus far been unwilling to talk about any contingency plans including refugee camps other than to warn of an exodus of Serbs from Kosovo and implicate the international community as partially responsible. The GOS is correct in its assessment that the Radicals would exploit this exodus for political gain, but it uses the refugee issue in the same way) only as a dramatic threat and stops short of disclosing real contingency plans, if there are any.

(S) International agencies and international NGOs, led by UNHCR, have prepared contingency plans in case of a population outflow. They expect population flows within Kosovo (to enclaves) and out of Kosovo following the determination of its status, but are hoping that they will be gradual enough not to require a massive relief effort, which would be difficult to fund. UNHCR has kept a fairly tight hold on its contingency plans for fear of politicizing the situation. (The Serbian government is aware of these plans but has not participated in them.) Much will depend on the kinds of security assurances given the minority communities, both by the international community (including Serbia) and the PISG, and the extent to which shadowy elements on both sides can steer the outcome to their own political or personal ends.

(S) ARE THEIR KEY FACILITIES/INDUSTRIES IN NORTHERN KOSOVO THAT BELGRADE WOULD NOT WANT TO LOSE CONTROL OF? IF SO, WHAT ARE THEY? WHERE ARE THEY LOCATED?

(S) Northern Kosovo includes both a substantial portion of the rich coal reserves located in Kosovo, as well as all or part of the Trepca lead mines. It is remotely possible they would seek to block development or exploitation of these resources pending resolution of what the Serbs see as key issues. Serbia also has worked to retain the ability to provide both power and telecommunications services to Serb-populated areas of Kosovo. Telekom Srbije, in particular, is quite active in Kosovo.

1E. (U) MINORITY RIGHTS AND KOSOVO SERB ISSUES

1) (S) HOW WOULD A FUTURE BELGRADE GOVERNMENT SEEK TO PROTECT ETHNIC SERB INTERESTS THROUGHOUT THE BALKANS IF KOSOVO AND MONTENEGRO BECOME INDEPENDENT?

(S) We believe Belgrade's response to an independent Kosovo will be confined to Kosovo. As with the other questions related to larger plans for destabilization, we do not see any indication that this is in the cards. Nevertheless, Tadic himself believes that an independent Kosovo will naturally destabilize the situation in Macedonia and in Bosnia.

1F. (U) BELGRADE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (SPC)

1) (S) WHAT COORDINATION IS OCCURRING BETWEEN BELGRADE AND THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH TO PROTECT KOSOVO SERBIAN INSTITUTIONS IN KOSOVO?

(S) The position of the church is complicated by internal infighting. There is a moderate wing (Fr. Irinej Dobrijevic, Bishops Teodosije and Grigoriye) which has attempted to develop an apolitical position that would respond to the SPC's specific interests in Kosovo (property and religious mission). There are harder-line elements which believe that the SPC is a quasi-political institution as well as a religious authority. We would caution, however, against simplistic right/left distinctions among the bishops. This is a confusing and Byzantine organization with a great number of cross-cutting interests.

(S) Certainly there are those in the SPC who maintain a close dialogue with senior GOS officials (e.g. Amfilohije is the

uncle of Kostunica,s wife and Bishop Irinej of Backa is known to be an active participant in internal government discussions on nationalist issues).

(S) In general, we have reported moderate elements of the SPC complaining to us of pressure from the PM directly on the SPC leadership to work in lockstep with the GOS throughout the status negotiations. The PM views SPC deviation from GOS policy as a potential &Trojan horse8 for Kosovo independence and overall weakness in Serbia,s case (reftel 2).

2) (S) HOW ARE VARIOUS SERBIAN POLITICAL PARTIES ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, AND VICE VERSA, TO HELP BUILD A CASE FOR OR AGAINST A KOSOVO SETTLEMENT?

(S) The PM is seized with maintaining an SPC that is in line with his nationalist philosophy and will intervene as

necessary to keep the SPC leadership predisposed to supporting him. The SPC leadership wants to keep the PM and the DSS in power) they see the Radicals as extremely unhelpful to them and although SPC leaders have made overtures to the DS, they have found Tadic to be less receptive than the PM to their current hardline stance. Meanwhile, the DS is working closely with moderate elements in the SPC to try and reinforce efforts to forge a constructive SPC position. There are also reports that Tadic,s people are working closely with certain bishops and financiers to try and influence who will be the next Patriarch.
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